

## Editorial preface

Ronald L. Hall<sup>1</sup>

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I am happy to say that the articles we publish often initiate further significant discussion. Andrew Lake, for example, offers a response to a recently published article by Daniel Lim who discusses the relevance of the “doing/allowing” distinction for the problem of evil. In particular, Lake argues that Lim’s claim to have dissolved the moral significance of the doing/allowing distinction is unsuccessful. Acknowledging that there are other ways to address the problem of the relationship between divine control and human freedom, Lake takes the position that the way of middle knowledge is one path that avoids the dissolution that Lim proposes.

All math phoebes will welcome Kevin Schilbrack’s resistance to the idea that the study of math can count as a religion. He realizes that his original definition, which he characterizes as “dithetic”, is flawed in allowing the study to math to count as a religion. So he proposes, an amended definition that he characterizes as “polythetic”. He argues that this new definition, modeled on Wittgenstein’s anti-essentialist concept of family resemblances, avoids this flaw.

In the next article, we have a kind of analytically updated version of Tillich’s famous idea that God is the ground of everything that exists. Unlike Tillich, who denies that God “exists”, Soufiane Hamri argues that this ground of being is a unique independent existent. Hamri takes this conclusion that such a being exists as the sustaining cause of all other existents to be a significant confirmation of western monotheism.

Next, Marciano Adilio Spica argues that constructive dialogue and mutual understanding amongst diverse religious perspectives does not require a common core of beliefs, or that one belief system is reduced to another. It does, however, presuppose something common: diverse beliefs could not be formed if believers

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✉ Ronald L. Hall  
ronhall@stetson.edu

<sup>1</sup> Department of Philosophy, Stetson University, Deland, FL 32723, USA

were not linguistic beings. And given this linguistic core, it is not surprising that diverse belief systems have arisen. Using Wittgenstein and D.Z. Phillips, Spica argues that if we understood religious belief systems as “world-pictures,” as different ways of seeing the world, the prospects for mutual intelligibility are advanced.

According to Taylor W. Cyr, monergism is the belief that God brings about salvation without the cooperation of the one that is saved, while synergism requires such cooperation. The worry often expressed about synergism is that it opens the door to some form of Pelagianism. The worry with monergism is that it traces sin to God. Cyr discusses three recent attempts by Cross, Stump, and Timpe to embrace monergism’s anti-Pelagian belief that God alone is responsible for salvation, and yet avoid tracing sin to God by defending the power of human beings to resist God’s grace. While these recent attempts to embrace monergism are successful in avoiding the Pelagian view that human beings can cause salvation apart from God’s grace, they do not address the question of whether or not the person who resists (or omits to resist) grace is praiseworthy for doing so. As such, these accounts do not completely dispose of Pelagian worries. Suggestions for doing so are offered.

In the last essay, the question is whether natural theology is of epistemic usefulness for non-believers. As Christopher M.P. Tomaszewski points out, a prominent critique of Paul Moser’s rejection of such usefulness is based on a principle called “Seek” which Moser seems to accept. According to this principle, God may be hidden from the non-believer because of a failure to seek God that is in harmony with how God reveals himself. As the critique runs, “Seek” implies another principle called “Access”. According to this principle, if the non-believer had properly sought God, she would have gained knowledge of (access to) God. And this is where natural theology is useful: it can inform the non-believer of how God reveals himself. Hence, Moser is wrong to deny this usefulness, since he presupposes it by implicitly accepting the “Access” principle by virtue of accepting the “Seek” principle. The authors of this article deny that “Seek” implies “Access”, but they do not deny that natural theology is of epistemic usefulness to the non-believer.